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Women Committed to County Facilities

In Massachusetts, 1970 To 1980

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Abstract

The focus of this report is a description of women who were committed to a term of incarceration in a county facility in Massachusetts during the period 1970 to 1980. Women represent about 3 percent of all commitments to county facilities annually. During the period 1970 to 1980 an average of 140 women were committed to these facilities each year. Presently the modal woman is committed to the Hampden county facility on a three-month sentence for a property offense. She is likely to be 21 to 24 years of age, single and have a tenth grade education. Changes in the characteristics of women committed to county facilities over time are discussed in the report. Some comparisons between women committed to county and state facilities are made as well.

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Women Committed to County Facilities In Massachusetts, 1970 To 1980

Over the past decade an average of 272 women each year were committed to serve a period of incarceration in a state or county facility in Massachusetts. On the average 132 women were committed to state facilities each year and 140 women were committed to county facilities each year. Women represent only four percent of the offenders committed to the correctional facilities in Massachusetts each year and as such are often overlooked when considering the largely male statistics regarding the inmate population of the prisons, jails and houses of correction. This report is an attempt to describe those women who are committed to county facilities (houses of correction or jails) during the period 1970 to 1980.

For men and women who are convicted and sentenced to a term of imprisonment in Massachusetts, three types of sentences can be given. The first type of sentence is called a state prison sentence. It carries both a minimum and maximum term of years to be served. The minimum sentence is at least two and one-half years in length, the maximum is no longer than the law allows. The second type of sentence is an indeterminate or reformatory sentence. These sentences

have no minimum term but have a maximum term at least two and one-half years in length and no longer than the law allows. The third type of sentence is a county sentence. These sentences are definite sentences but have a term of imprisonment of not more than two and one-half years in length. The type of sentence received is dependent on the offense, on the criminal record of the offender and on the judge's discretion.

When men are sentenced they originally are sent to the type of institution to which their sentences relate. Men receiving state prison sentences go to the state prison (MCI-Walpole), men receiving state reformatory sentences go to the state reformatory for men (MCI-Concord) and men receiving county sentences go to one of the county facilities. Men sent to Walpole or Concord come under the jurisdiction of the state's Department of Correction (DOC) and men sent to a county facility come under the jurisdiction of the sheriff of that particular county.

All women receiving state sentences, that is state prison or state reformatory sentences, are sent to the state's co-correctional facility at Framingham. Unlike men, women receiving county sentences can be sent to either a county facility or to the state facility at Framingham. This difference in the treatment of men and women offenders is provided for by Chapter 279, section 16 of the laws of Massachusetts:

> A female, convicted of a crime punishable by imprisonment in a jail or house of correction may be sentenced to the Massachusetts Correctional Institution, Framingham.

This report focuses only on those women who receive a county sentence and are committed to a county facility. Women receiving

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county sentences who serve those sentences at MCI-Framingham will be considered only briefly in this report.

This report will first provide a general overview of the number of men and women committed to both state and county facilities during the period 1970 to 1980. Changes in the level of commitments and the composition of the placement of women offenders during this time period will be examined as well. The report will then focus on a description of those women receiving county sentences who are then committed to county facilities. Variables describing their personal and criminal backgrounds will be discussed. Changes in this group of women offenders during the time period will be noted as well.

Information used in this report was gathered from the Correction and Parole Management Information System (CAPMIS) data base for commitments to county and state facilities. This data base contains information on a small number of variables for county commitments. Variables to be considered include: offense, sentence, institution committed to, age at incarceration, marital status, education and year of commitment. Information on all variables is not available for every year under consideration. Additional information for state and county commitments for the years 1970, 1971 and 1972 was taken from the Annual Report of the Commissioner of Correction for those years. In each table the number of cases in each category is given first followed by the corresponding column percentage which is always shown in parentheses.

Number of Commitments

The number of women receiving commitments to state and county facilities declined from 351 in 1970 to 165 in 1974. From 1974 to 1980 there was a steady increase in the number of women committed each year, from 165 in 1974 to 349 in 1980.

The distribution of women into the various sentence and jurisdictional groups changed as well (Table 1). The proportion of women receiving county sentences and serving those sentences in county facilities decreased over time. Early in the period almost two-thirds of women offenders were in this category. Presently about one-third of all women are committed to a county facility. The number of women with county sentences committed to MCI-Framingham decreased from 1970 to 1973. Since 1973 the number of women serving county sentences in a state facility has increased. The number of women serving a state prison or reformatory sentence remained fairly stable over this time period, averaging 50 new commitments annually.

In summary from 1970 to 1974 there was a decline in the number of women entering the correctional system in Massachusetts. That decrease was from women serving county sentences in both county and state facilities. From 1974 until the present there has been an increase in the number of women entering correctional facilities as court commitments. This increase has been greatest among women serving county sentences, particularly those serving county sentences

at MCI-Framingham.

Women make up about 4 percent of the total number of individuals committed to correctional facilities, both state and county, each year. This proportion has not changed during the period 1970 to 1979. Women represent three percent of the commitments to county facilities annually. This percentage has remained fairly constant over the time period under study. Women represent about 11 percent of the commitments to state facilities annually. This proportion ranged from a low of 4 percent in 1973 to a high of 16 percent in 1970 and 1979. Table 2 shows the number of commitments to state and county facilities by sex for the years 1970 to 1979.

Women Committed to County Facilities

In this section some of the criminal and personal characteristics of women committed to county facilities during the time period 1970 to 1980 will be considered. The county facilities to which they were committed, their offenses, sentences, age, education, and marital status will be discussed. The purpose of this section of the study is to describe the typical woman committed to these facilities and to trace changes in women offenders over time. Tables 3 through 8 at the end of the report present the information which is discussed in this section.

These tables refer only to women who received county sentences and were committed to a county facility.

County

During this time period there have been several changes in the placements available for women in the county system. The institution to which a woman is committed is generally dependent on geographical considerations, on the availability of bedspace and on judicial discretion. Two large facilities, Charles Street Jail and Worcester House of Correction, closed their sections for women during this period. In 1970 three institutions housed more than eighty percent of new female commitments: Hampden and Worcester County Houses of Correction and Charles Street Jail. In 1980 two institutions housed more than eighty percent of these women: Hampden and Plymouth County Houses of Correction. Counties with few or no places available for women would generally place women at MCI-Framingham or in the nearest available facility. It is important to note that changes in the distribution of county institution committed to is not reflective of the residences of women offenders or even the location of the courts sentencing these women.

Offense

Women committed to the county system most often have committed the crimes of larceny, disturbing the peace or prostitution. These three crimes account for about half of the women committed to the county system.

From 1970 to 1973, drunkenness was a major offense for this population as were crimes against chastity. The decriminalization of drunkenness radically changed the type of offender served by

county facilities.

During the time period under study there has generally been a slight increase in the number and proportion of women committed for offenses against persons, in particular crimes of an assaultive nature. Sex offenses have only recently appeared and are very few in number. Property crimes now account for almost half of all offenses, in 1970 only 14 percent of all women were incarcerated for these offenses. Larceny is the most common property offense, followed by forgery and uttering and burglary. Drug offenses account for only a small proportion of all commitments to the county system. Offenses in the "Other" category decreased during the time period, primarily because of the decriminalization of drunkenness. Other offenses generally include disturbing the peace, prostitution, contempt of court and motor vehicle offenses. Offenses in the "Other" category now account for about one-third of all commitments.

Sentencing

Sentencing changes have accompanied the changes in the offenses for which women are committed to the county system. From 1970 to 1973 the median sentence was one month. During 1974 and 1975 the median sentence was six months. Since 1976 the median sentence has been 3 months. Changes in sentencing reflect the preponderance of drunkenness cases early in the decade.

Age at Incarceration

Median age at incarceration decreased during this time period, probably a reflection of the change in the way in which drunkenness was treated by the criminal justice system. At the beginning of the decade over a third of the women committed to the county system were over 40 years of age; presently less than 5 percent fall into that age category. The median of incarceration during most of this time period was in the age category of 21 to 24 years.

Marital Status

There is an increasing proportion of single women committed to county facilities and a decreasing proportion of married women. Presently over half of the women committed are single, about one-fifth are married and the remaining are either divorced, separated or widowed.

Education

Information on the educational level of women committed to county facilities is available for only two years of the study period: 1979 and 1980. The median educational level of this population is tenth grade. About one-quarter of the sample have completed high school and about 5 percent have some college training.

Summary

In 1980 the modal woman committed to a county facility would be incarcerated on a three month sentence in either Plymouth or Hampden county facilities for the offense of larceny. She is probably single, between the ages of 21 and 24 and has a tenth grade education. This contrasts sharply with the modal woman committed in 1970 who would have been incarcerated in the Suffolk County Jail for the crime of drunkenness. Her sentence would have been 1 month, her age would have been between 25 and 30 and she would just as likely be single as to be married or in a state of marital separation.

Women comprise about 3 percent of all commitments to county facilities each year. The number of women committed to county facilities declined over the first half of the decade and has remained fairly constant from 1974 to the present. This report focused on women receiving county sentences and placed in a county institution. Considered only briefly in this report are women with county sentences placed in a state facility, a group of women offenders that is growing as fewer counties offer placements for women.

This report was intended to consider one segment of the population in county facilities in some detail. While information is limited on this population it is hoped that this study can provide an overview and description, if only sketchy, of this population.

Table 1

Women Committed To State And County Facilities
In Massachusetts by Sentence Type And
Jurisdiction, 1970 To 1980

YEAR	County Sentence County Facility Number	Percent	County Sentence State Facility Number	Percent	State Sentence State Facility Number	Percent	T O T A L Number	Percent
1970	217	(62)	94	(27)	40	(11)	351	(100)
1971	219	(60)	77	(21)	67	(18)	363	(100)
1972	211	(70)	42	(14)	50	(16)	303	(100)
1973	144	(75)	15	(8)	33	(17)	192	(100)
1974	81	(49)	35	(21)	49	(30)	165	(100)
1975	101	(45)	69	(31)	53	(24)	223	(100)
1976	124	(48)	82	(32)	51	(20)	257	(100)
1977	94	(37)	100	(40)	58	(23)	252	(100)
1978	136	(52)	67	(26)	57	(22)	260	(100)
1979	92	(33)	152	(55)	33	(12)	277	(100)
1980	126	(36)	169	(48)	54	(16)	349	(100)
Annual Average	140	(52)	82	(30)	50	(18)	272	(100)

Table 2

Individuals Committed to State and County Facilities
By Sex, 1970 to 1979

Commitment Year	STATE			COUNTY			TOTAL		
	Males	Females	Percent Female	Males	Females	Percent Female	Males	Females	Percent Female
1970	725	134	(16)	7902	217	(3)	8627	351	(4)
1971	947	144	(13)	6255	219	(3)	7202	363	(5)
1972	1021	92	(8)	5183	211	(4)	6204	303	(5)
1973	966	48	(4)	4031	144	(4)	4997	192	(4)
1974	871	84	(10)	2821	81	(3)	3692	165	(4)
1975	1072	122	(12)	3314	101	(3)	4386	223	(5)
1976	1070	133	(10)	4269	124	(3)	5339	257	(5)
1977	950	158	(14)	4075	94	(2)	5025	252	(5)
1978	993	124	(12)	4099	136	(3)	5092	260	(5)
1979	949	185	(16)	4520	92	(2)	5496	277	(5)
TOTAL	9564	1224	(11)	46469	1419	(3)	56033	2643	(4)

Table 3

County Institution Committed To

County	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980
Barnstable	0 (0)	2 (1)	2 (1)	0 (0)	6 (7)	4 (4)	2 (2)	2 (2)	1 (1)	1 (1)	1 (1)
Berkshire	2 (1)	4 (2)	2 (1)	3 (2)	2 (2)	5 (3)	12 (10)	15 (16)	4 (3)	8 (9)	13 (10)
Bristol	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Dukes	0 (0)	0 (0)	30 (14)	9 (6)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Essex	9 (4)	26 (12)	31 (15)	14 (10)	8 (10)	2 (2)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Franklin	0 (0)	4 (2)	0 (0)	2 (1)	0 (0)	2 (2)	1 (1)	0 (0)	3 (2)	1 (1)	9 (7)
Hampden	23 (11)	21 (10)	24 (11)	15 (10)	9 (11)	21 (21)	22 (18)	14 (15)	23 (18)	39* (42)	52* (41)
Middlesex	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Norfolk	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (2)	0 (0)	1 (1)	4 (4)	5 (4)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Plymouth	13 (6)	20 (9)	13 (6)	26 (18)	12 (15)	23 (23)	21 (17)	13 (14)	36 (26)	39* (42)	51 (41)
Suffolk	121* (56)	86* (39)	54* (26)	34 (24)	2 (2)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Worcester	41 (19)	56 (26)	52 (25)	40* (28)	39* (48)	43* (42)	63* (51)	45* (48)	58* (43)	2 (2)	0 (0)
Total	217	219	211	144	81	101	124	94	136	92	125

* modal county institution committed to

Table 4

Offense

	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980
Person Offenses											
Manslaughter	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	1	0	0	1
Assault w/i Murder	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Armed Robbery	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0
Unarmed Robbery	0	0	0	2	0	1	1	0	2	0	0
Assault/A&B	0	1	3	2	5	1	7	3	5	3	4
A&B W. D.W.	0	0	0	0	3	0	1	2	3	5	5
Assault w/D.W.	0	0	3	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Conspiracy	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Extortion	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	0
Kidnapping	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	0	2	7	4	9	4	12	9	10	10	10
	(0)	(1)	(3)	(3)	(11)	(4)	(10)	(10)	(7)	(11)	(8)
Sex Offenses											
Rape of Child	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Unnatural Acts	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	3	0	0	1
Other Sex Offenses	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	3	0	1	1
	(0)	(0)	(0)	(0)	(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(0)	(1)	(1)
Property Offenses											
Arson	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	2
Burglary	0	0	0	10	9	5	8	4	5	4	6
B&E/Larceny	2	7	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Larceny Fr. Person	2	2	2	3	0	0	2	0	3	2	1
Larceny	18	12	20	11	10	24	27	19	36	25	27
Theft of a M.V.	2	1	0	0	0	0	5	1	3	0	0
Forgery & Uttering	2	2	1	5	1	3	8	6	5	10	7
Fraud	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0
Receiving Stolen Goods	2	4	2	0	1	4	5	4	3	3	3
Malicious Destruction	3	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	3	1	8
Poss. of Tools	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	31	28	34	30	23	38	56	34	60	46	54
	(14)	(13)	(16)	(21)	(28)	(39)	(45)	(36)	(44)	(50)	(43)

Drug Offenses											
Possession of Drug	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Stealing Narcotic	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Possession of Syringe	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	4
Controlled Substance	0	0	0	0	0	14	6	4	9	2	4
Class A C.S.	0	0	0	0	0	6	1	1	2	0	1
Class B C.S.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	1
Class D C.S.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Sale of Heroin	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0
Narcotic Drug Law	10	16	29	14	18	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	10	16	29	14	18	20	11	7	13	5	10
	(5)	(7)	(14)	(10)	(22)	(20)	(9)	(7)	(10)	(5)	(8)
Other Offenses											
Drunkenness	99	112	63	28	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Liquor Law	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Under the Influence	0	0	2	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	3
Disturbing Peace	10	14	32	11	13	14	22	20	17	7	6
Crimes Against Chastity	33	21	25	29	9	0	0	0	0	0	0
Common Night Walker	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	6	8
Prostitution	0	0	0	0	0	4	9	9	9	11	21
Contempt of Court	7	3	2	1	4	11	1	3	4	2	2
Motor Vehicle	2	6	5	10	1	2	4	5	9	2	3
Escape	0	1	3	3	0	0	1	0	1	0	0
Weapons	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Bartley-Fox	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
Evading Taxes	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gaming	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Non-Support	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Other	25	16	6	10	4	4	5	3	9	2	6
TOTAL	176	173	141	96	31	36	43	41	53	30	51
	(81)	(79)	(67)	(67)	(38)	(36)	(35)	(44)	(39)	(33)	(41)
GRAND TOTAL	217	219	211	144	81	99	124	94	136	92	126
	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)
Missing Observations	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0

Table 5

Sentence Received

Sentence	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980
Fine	69 (32)	39 (18)	49 (23)	25 (17)	18 (22)	13 (13)	26 (21)	22 (23)	28 (21)	9 (10)	7 (6)
Less Than 1 Month	55 (25)	60 (27)	63 (30)	37 (26)	9 (11)	13 (13)	15 (12)	14 (15)	15 (11)	12 (13)	13 (10)
1 Month	44* (20)	76* (35)	30* (14)	23* (16)	6 (7)	11 (11)	18 (14)	12 (13)	26 (19)	11 (12)	32 (25)
2 Months	10 (5)	4 (2)	10 (5)	6 (4)	3 (4)	6 (6)	5 (4)	2 (2)	11 (8)	10 (11)	9 (7)
3 Months	22 (10)	13 (6)	19 (9)	10 (7)	11 (14)	10 (10)	15* (12)	11* (12)	18* (13)	19* (21)	18* (14)
4 Months	0 (0)	2 (1)	3 (1)	3 (2)	1 (1)	1 (1)	0 (0)	1 (1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (2)
5 Months	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (1)	2 (2)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
6 Months	13 (6)	15 (7)	24 (11)	20 (14)	16* (20)	22* (22)	25 (20)	11 (12)	20 (15)	10 (11)	24 (19)
7 Months	0 (0)	1 (0)	1 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
8 Months	0 (0)	1 (0)	0 (0)	2 (1)	1 (1)	2 (2)	1 (1)	2 (2)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)
9 to 11 Months	0 (0)	1 (0)	1 (0)	2 (1)	3 (4)	2 (2)	0 (0)	3 (3)	1 (1)	1 (1)	1 (1)
12 to 15 Months	4 (2)	1 (0)	3 (1)	11 (8)	5 (6)	13 (13)	10 (8)	11 (12)	10 (7)	9 (10)	10 (8)
16 to 18 Months	0 (0)	1 (0)	3 (1)	2 (1)	3 (4)	3 (3)	2 (2)	1 (1)	3 (2)	2 (2)	3 (2)
20 to 24 Months	0 (0)	5 (2)	3 (1)	2 (1)	2 (2)	2 (2)	5 (4)	0 (0)	4 (3)	6 (6)	4 (3)
Over 2 Years	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (1)	1 (1)	3 (4)	3 (3)	1 (1)	2 (2)	0 (0)	3 (3)	3 (2)
TOTAL	217 (100)	219 (100)	211 (100)	144 (100)	81 (100)	101 (100)	124 (100)	94 (100)	136 (100)	92 (100)	126 (100)

* Median Sentence Excluding Fines

Table 6

Age at Incarceration

Age at Incarceration	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980
17	9 (4)	4 (2)	12 (6)	5 (4)	6 (8)	5 (5)	8 (6)	3 (3)	7 (5)	1 (1)	7 (6)
18	13 (6)	11 (5)	16 (8)	7 (5)	8 (10)	11 (11)	8 (6)	7 (8)	13 (10)	13 (14)	9 (7)
19	12 (6)	14 (6)	19 (9)	13 (9)	6 (8)	11 (11)	17 (14)	8 (9)	10 (7)	6 (7)	13 (10)
20	18 (8)	9 (4)	16 (8)	6 (4)	10 (13)	10 (10)	12 (10)	6 (6)	9 (7)	8 (9)	14 (11)
21 to 24	42 (19)	55 (25)	61* (29)	48* (33)	23* (29)	24* (24)	25* (21)	31* (33)	34* (25)	28* (30)	36* (29)
25 to 30	19* (9)	23* (10)	24 (11)	20 (14)	15 (19)	23 (23)	31 (26)	19 (20)	35 (26)	23 (25)	20 (16)
31 to 40	25 (12)	19 (9)	18 (9)	23 (16)	6 (8)	9 (9)	16 (13)	14 (15)	15 (11)	10 (11)	19 (15)
Over 40	79 (36)	84 (38)	45 (21)	22 (15)	5 (6)	8 (8)	6 (5)	6 (7)	13 (10)	4 (4)	8 (6)
TOTAL	217 (100)	219 (100)	211 (100)	144 (100)	79 (100)	101 (100)	123 (100)	94 (100)	136 (100)	92 (100)	126 (100)
Missing Observations	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0

* Median Age at Incarceration

Table 7

Marital Status

	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980
Single	109 (50)	115 (53)	128 (61)	84 (58)	45 (58)	49 (49)	69 (56)	46 (49)	83 (61)	57 (62)	87 (69)
Married	59 (27)	43 (20)	46 (22)	29 (20)	16 (21)	23 (23)	22 (18)	13 (14)	16 (12)	20 (22)	16 (13)
Divorced	23 (11)	33 (15)	13 (6)	10 (7)	14 (18)	20 (20)	22 (18)	17 (18)	21 (15)	10 (11)	15 (12)
Separated	15 (7)	13 (6)	12 (6)	7 (5)	3 (4)	0 (0)	9 (7)	7 (8)	7 (5)	1 (1)	4 (3)
Widowed	11 (5)	15 (7)	12 (6)	14 (10)	0 (0)	9 (9)	2 (2)	10 (11)	9 (9)	4 (4)	4 (3)
TOTAL	217 (100)	219 (100)	211 (100)	144 (100)	78 (100)	101 (100)	124 (100)	93 (100)	136 (100)	92 (100)	126 (100)
Mi-sing Observations	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	1	0	0	0

Table 8

Educational Level

Education	1979	1980
Grades 1 - 8	18 (20)	15 (12)
Grade 9	7 (8)	27 (22)
Grade 10	18 (20)	26 (21)
Grade 11	17 (18)	22 (18)
High School	26 (6)	28 (22)
Some College Training	6 (7)	8 (6)
TOTAL	92 (100)	126 (100)